

## Chapter 3

# Responsible Trapping



### Legal Obligations



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Trappers, hunters, and anglers must know the regulations and follow them to help conserve resources, and to be accepted in the conservation community



**Content Standard** - *Students demonstrate an awareness of their responsibilities to landowners, wildlife, other outdoor users, and the public*

## Introduction

Trappers have a legal responsibility to follow regulations. Trappers have a moral obligation to make good decisions when their actions might affect wildlife, landowners, other outdoor users, or the public. Ethical trappers consistently make decisions that result in the greatest good for wildlife, the environment, and people.



**Know that there are legal and social obligations to follow trapping regulations**

In most situations, trapping is considered a privilege. Society expects trappers to behave in certain ways if they want to trap. That is why we have regulations for seasons, traps, sets, permission to trap, and public safety. A trapper who fails to follow regulations faces possible fines, jail time, and the loss of licenses. Illegal trappers also face disapproval from other trappers and outdoor users. If you want to be accepted by other trappers, you must know the regulations and follow them.



**Know that responsible trapping involves many decisions that cannot be defined by law**

Laws cannot define what is right or wrong for you in every situation. You must use judgment based on your knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experience to decide what is right or wrong. You can learn from your family or a trusted mentor. In time, you will understand how to make good decisions on your own.

Your relationships with other people, and your social acceptance as a trapper, develop as people come to know how you behave. When you behave in ways



that are good for animal welfare, landowners, other outdoor users, and the public, you will be an ethical trapper.



### ***Know that ethics is a system of principles for good conduct***

Ethics is a term you should know. Many trappers, hunters, and anglers discuss ethics. Ethics is not a science. Ethics deals with right or wrong in human behavior.

Good behavior in one situation may not be good in another. As an example, if beaver have entered an area where they are causing damage you may choose to take as many as you can. If beaver are scarce on another property, you should take only a few of the animals.



### ***List three specific ways trappers can demonstrate responsible behavior concerning wildlife***

Animal welfare is a top concern for the general public, trappers, and other conservationists. You should:

- Know Best Management Practices and use BMP recommended traps and sets to enhance animal welfare
- Work to maintain or improve wildlife habitat and minimize any negative effects your trapping activity might have on vegetation or non-target wildlife
- Report hunting and trapping violations to authorities
- Report suspected wildlife diseases
- Fully use trapped furbearers
- Cooperate with state and federal fish and wildlife management agencies
- Obey all regulations governing trapping and use of lands.

#### Ethics

Ethics concerns right and wrong in human behavior. Although it involves the application of human reason, it is not a science.

#### Definition of Responsible

- Liable to be required to give account, as of one's actions or of the discharge of a duty or trust.
- Involving personal accountability or ability to act without guidance or superior authority.



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A Tradition of Cooperation

## Responsible Trapping

Trappers, hunters, and anglers work with resource agencies in many ways



Ohio DOW Photo

Trappers must demonstrate responsible behavior

State and national trapping organizations benefit individual trappers, trappers as a group, and society by promoting conservation and responsible behavior



### ***List three specific ways trappers can demonstrate responsible behavior to the public***

Trappers must demonstrate respect toward all other people if they expect to be treated with respect in return. Many people do not understand that wildlife is a renewable resource or that trapping benefits wildlife and people. Your attitudes and behavior will affect people in a positive or a negative way. You should:

- Avoid trapping near property boundaries where you do not have permission unless you contact the people who live there and discuss your plans
- Avoid making sets that might capture pets and other domestic animals
- Be able to explain trapping as a highly regulated activity that provides positive benefits to society
- Be a public advocate for animal welfare and wildlife management
- Know the trapping/furbearer regulations and follow them
- Follow trapping BMPs whenever possible



### ***List three specific ways trappers can demonstrate responsible behavior to other trappers***

Trappers must cooperate with each other to ensure the continued use of trapping as an accepted wildlife management technique.

- Join state and/or national trapping organizations so you can learn from others and share your knowledge
- Avoid disturbing another trapper's sets
- Report illegal trappers so their behavior doesn't ruin trapping for everyone
- Help teach and mentor new trappers



***List three specific ways trappers can demonstrate responsible behavior to hunters and other outdoor users***

Millions of North American citizens participate in outdoor activities. Responsible trapping is compatible with other activities at most times and places. To avoid potential conflicts with other outdoor users you should:

- Ask landowners who else might be using their property during trapping season. Communicate with them to find out when and what they might be doing;
- Avoid land trapping on public or private property when hunters may be out in numbers, especially those using dogs;
- Check traps early each morning to remove animals that may be found by dogs or people;
- Wear hunter orange clothing so hunters can clearly identify you as a person;
- Support responsible hunting when hunters need your help;
- Be a responsible steward for all wildlife and habitats;
- Obey all land use rules on lands upon which you are trapping.



***List three ways trappers can care for and respect natural resources while pursuing and taking furbearers***

Trappers should recognize positive and negative values of furbearers and habitat in the environment:

- Avoid destroying living vegetation to make sets
- Decrease your trapping activity in areas where furbearer populations are low
- Don't drive vehicles off the road where you may destroy natural vegetation
- Practice low impact camping



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Respect others who use the outdoors, such as birdwatchers



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Responsible trappers respect other people who enjoy using the outdoors

## Responsible Trapping



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Behave responsibly even when  
no one is watching



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This trapper has earned the  
respect of landowners. As a  
result, he has access to thou-  
sands of acres of private land  
for trapping.

- Support the reintroduction of species to areas they once inhabited



### ***Participate in open discussions on the ethics and responsibilities associated with trapping***

Group discussions are an excellent way to develop your understanding of ethics and responsibilities. Here are some topics to get you started. For each situation consider:

- What you could do
- What you should do
- What you would do

Note that some of the items that you may want to consider are provided in Appendix A. However, please do not turn to these pages until after you have considered the points listed above. If you are in a classroom setting, wait for the instructor to tell you to look at the appendix.

**Scenario 1** - *Your older cousin invites you to go trapping. Along the way, you come to a fence posted with “No Trespassing” signs. As he starts to cross the fence, you ask him “Do we have permission to go there?” He responds, “The owner doesn’t care, and besides, he never comes back here; now come on, let’s go.”*

**Scenario 2** - *It is Christmas break from school. You have put out a trapline with more than 3 dozen sets. One afternoon a friend calls and asks you to spend the night and go to an all-day party the next day. It sounds like fun and you really want to go.*

**Scenario 3** - *A friend introduces you to a Mr. Smith who is complaining about problems with raccoons on his new 500 acre farm. He gives you permission to trap. On the third day of the season at a remote part of the farm you are confronted by a fox trapper who accuses you of trespassing on property where he claims sole permission to trap. You tell him you have permission from Mr. Smith, but he claims the property is owned by the Jones family, who moved to the city several years ago.*

**Scenario 4** - *You are checking your land sets on public land where you haven’t seen anyone else since trapping season opened. Suddenly, you hear several gunshots and turn to see a group of about a dozen hunters in a wide line walking across the field in your direction. As you watch, you can hear the*

## Safety - Animal Welfare - Responsibility - Furbearer Conservation



*sound of dog bells and beepers coming closer. They are going to pass through an area where you have several foothold traps set for coyotes.*

**Scenario 5** - *You are trapping on private land where you know the landowner is generous about giving permission to hunters and trappers. You find a muskrat in one of your body-gripping traps at a den site. A man and a young girl approach you and accuse you of stealing fur from their traps. You haven't stolen anything, and you haven't seen anyone else's traps on the property since the season opened. How would you respond?*

**Scenario 6** - *It is the second day of trapping season. Before school, you checked your traps and found several muskrats, a mink, and two raccoons. After school you return home and begin the process of skinning and fleshing your fur when three friends show up. One of them is offended to find out that you are a trapper. You don't know what the other two think because they are unusually quiet. What would you say to your friend?*

**Scenario 7** - *It is six weeks before the trapping season opens. You show up at a farm to do some scouting where you have permission to trap. The landowner complains about deer damaging his orchard. He comes out of the house with two rifles and says he wants to go along while you scout and have you help him kill several deer. If you turn him down, he may not let you trap on his property anymore. You know that there are too many deer in the area, and the wildlife agency has given several farmers permits to shoot some of them. You don't know if this landowner has a permit, and you are not sure of the rules even if he does have a permit.*

**Scenario 8** - *You are out checking your fox traps on a private farm. As you approach a set, you find a fox in someone else's trap set about 30 feet upwind of one of your dirt-hole sets. You can see well in all directions and no one else is around. You've worked hard to do everything right, and you feel like that fox would have been yours if the other trapper had stayed away.*



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Trapping instructor passing it on

What could you do?

What should you do?

What would you do?



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Adventure awaits -  
be responsible